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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 AID-05 EB-07 /099 W
---------- 043748
R 221030Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7855
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 161
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 4182

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PFOR, BG, IN, PKOF
SUBJECT: COUP IN BANGLADESH: ONE
WEEK LATER

1. IN THE WEEK THAT HAS PASSED SINCE THE SLAYING OF SHEIKH MUJIB AND HIS EXTENDED FAMILY, ORDER IN BANGLADESH HAS BEEN AFFIRMED BUT STABILITY HAS YET TO BE RESTORED. THE CHIEF DOMESTIC ACTIONS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN TAKEN AT A MEASURED PACE. ON THE DAY OF THE COUP, MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED (DACCA 3943), AND KHONDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED WAS IN-STALLED AS PRESIDENT AND ANNOUNCED FORMATION OF HIS CABINET (DACCA 3953). ON THE THIRD DAY, PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE EXHORTED BANGALEES TO RETURN TO WORK AND
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ORDERED REEIMPTION OF ALL INTERNAL TRANSPORTATION. ON

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THE FIFTH DAY, THE CABINET MEMBERS WERE ASSIGNED PORT-
FOLIOS (DACCA 4134), A FEW KEY ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINT-
MENTS WERE MADE, AND A PROCLAMATION WAS ISSUED, REGU-
LARIZING MARTIAL LAW AND AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION --
UNABROGATED BUT MADE SUBSIDIARY TO MARTIAL LAW ENACT-
MENTS -- TO ENABLE MUSHTAQUE'S ACCESSION TO THE PRESI-
DENCY (DACCA 4106). ON THE SIXTH DAY, A GOVERNMENT
SPOKESMAN EXPHASIZED THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF
THE STATE -- NATIONALISM, SOCIALISM, DEMOCRACY AND
SECULARISM -- REMAIN INTACT (DACCA'S A-102 OF AUGUST
22). AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY, THE CABINET, PRESIDED OVER
BY PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE, DETERMINED THE NATIONAL CAP AND
THE OFFICIAL DRESS (ACHKAN OR SHERWANI), BOTH OF WHICH
ARE IDENTICAL WITH THOSE HABITUALLY WORN BY MUSHTAQUE.

2. GIVEN THE TRAUMA THROUGH WHICH BANGLADESH HAS PASSED
DURING THE LAST WEEK, THE LIMITED ACCOMPLISHMENTS
OF MUSHTAQUE'S GOVERNMENT ARE HARDLY SURPRISING. AND
GIVEN THE TENSIONS UNDER WHICH THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT
IS FORCED TO FUNCTION, IT MAY BE REMARKABLE THAT IT
ACCOMPLISHED AS MUCH AS IT HAS. WITHIN A DAY FOLLOWING
THE COUP, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT CONTENDING FORCES WERE
AT WORK WHICH WOULD MAKE ANY RETURN TO "NORMALITY" A
DIFFICULT, POSSIBLY TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS. IF ANYTHING,
THE CONTENTIONS ARE AS SHARP NOW AS IN THE IMMEDIATE
AFTERMATH OF THE COUP. THE CHIEF ACTORS ARE THE MILITARY,
DIVIDED BETWEEN THE COUP PERPETRATORS AND THE TROOPS
THEY CONTROL (A REPORTED 200-ODD WITHIN THE PRECINCTS
OF GANOBHABAN AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE LANCERS POSTED
AT BANGOBHABAN, RADIO BANGLADESH AND AT THE GATES OF
THE CANTONMENT) AND THE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE MILITARY,
WHO CONTROL THE REST OF THE TROOPS IN THE DACCA AREA,
MOST PARTICULARLY THE DACCA BRIGADE. AT ISSUE IS POWER
WITHIN THE ARMY, WITH THE SENIOR OFFICERS SEEKING TO
INSURE THAT THE CHAIN OF COMMAND IS NOT DESTROYED AND
THE COUP PERPETRATORS, WHO PLACED MUSHTAQUE IN OFFICE,
ANXIOUS TO EXERCISE GREATER AUTHORITY. THE GOVERNMENT
OF PRESIDENT MUSHTAQUE, PLACED IN POWER BY THE COUP
PERPETRATORS, SEEKS TO ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY AS IT CAN
WHILE AWAITING THE OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE
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MILITARY.

3. THE HANDFUL OF MAJORS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE COUP
APPEAR TO HAVE HAD NO FIRM IDEA ON HOW TO UNDERTAKE
"NEXT STEPS" AFTER THE DEATH OF MUJIB AND HIS REPLACE-
BY MUSHTAQUE (WHOM MANY BELIEVE HAD A MEASURE OF
FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE COUP). HOWEVER, IT MAY WELL BE
THAT THEY THOUGHT THAT, IF THEIR DRAMATIC ACTION SUC-

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CEEDED, BECAUSE OF THEIR DARING AND DECISIVENESS, THEY COULD COMMAND SOME WIDER LOYALTY WITHIN THE ARMY AND THAT, BECAUSE OF THEIR REMOVAL OF SHEIKH MUVJIB AND HIS CORRUPT FAMILY, THEY WOULD RECEIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT. AND PERHAPS, IN THE INITIAL AFTERMATH OF THE COUP, THEIR VIEWS MAY HAVE SEEMED TO HAVE SUBSTANCE. AS TIME PASSES, HOWEVER, THE COUP PERPETRATORS APPEAR TO BE LOSING THEIR STRUGGLE. THE SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS, HEADED BY THE CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF (COAS), MAJOR GENERAL SHAFIULLAH, WHO HAS THE CLOSE SUPPORT OF THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF (COGS), BRIGADIER KHALID MOSHARRAF, HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN PLAYING A WAITING GAME. THEY HAVE ACCOMMODATED THE COUP PERPETRATORS WHEN THE ISSUE IS THE RELATIVE ROLE OF THE MILITARY VIS-A-VIS THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, AS IN THE INSTANCE OF THE REPORTED "MILITARY ADVISORY COUNCIL" (DACCA 4146), BUT THEY MAY ANTICIPATE THAT AS THE EXPECTED BACKLASH AGAINST THE MURDERS OF THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SHEIKH MUJIB'S FAMILY SETS IN, THE COUP PERPETRATORS WILL LOSE SUPPORT AND BECOME DEMORALIZED. (IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THEY MAY ALSO COUNT ON BOREDOM AND APATHY TO ERODE THE LOYALTY OF THE FEW TROOPS COMMANDED BY THE COUP PLANNERS.)

4. RESOLUTION OF THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE ARMY WILL NOT, HOWEVER, NECESSARILY RESTORE STABILITY, FOR THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE BANGALEE POLITY WILL PROBABLY REQUIRE REDEFINITION. SINCE THE ARMY MAY WISH TO PLAY SOME MORE IMMEDIATE ROLE -- AND MOST DEFINITELY WILL AS LONG AS MARTIAL LAW REMAINS IN EFFECT -- A MEASURE OF CONTENTION AMONG THE SENIOR-MOST OFFICERS THEMSELVES MAY REEMERGE, WITH PERHAPS A REPLAY OF THE RIVALRY BETWEEN SHAFIULLAH AND THE DEPUTY COAS, MAJOR GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN, WHEN BOTH SOUGHT THE COAS APPOINTMENT IN 1972.
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THUS, IT MAY BE THAT THERE WILL BE FEW SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENTS ON THE DOMESTIC SCENE OVER THE NEAR-TERM. WE ARE CAUTIONED BY SEVERAL SOURCES THAT A MONTH MAY BE REQUIRED TO PLAY OUT THE SEVERAL DRAMAS NOW IN PROCESS, AND THAT THESE MAY INVOLVE A CABINET RE-SHUFFLE AND EVEN OCCASIONAL MOMENTS OF CRISIS.

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---------- 043843
R 221030Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
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AMEMBASSY RANGOON
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 4182

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. INSOFAR AS BANGLADESH'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS ARE CONCERNED, MUSHTAQUE IS AVID FOR RECOGNITION FOR TWO OBVIOUS REASONS. FIRST, THE PRESIDENT IS ANXIOUS THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE AN AIR OF LEGITIMACY, AND THIS IS ENHANCED BY THE POSITIVE RESPONSE OF OTHER NATIONS. SECOND, THE GOVERNMENT IS THOROUGHLY APPREHENSIVE OF INDIA, AND BELIEVES THAT RECOGNITION WILL DETER INDIAN INTERVENTION. PAKISTAN'S PROMPT RECOGNITION WAS WELCOMED, BUT HAS BEEN TREATED WITH GREAT EQUANIMITY. MOREOVER, NO PUBLIC MENTION HAS EVER BEEN MADE OF PAKISTAN'S PROFERRED GIFT OF RICE AND CLOTH.

6. THE POSSIBILITY THAT BANGLADESH WAS -- OR MIGHT BECOME -- AN "ISLAMIC REPUBLIC" SEEMS TO BE DECLINING. IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COUP, THERE WERE
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INDICATORS THAT EVEN IF THE FULL NAME OF BANGLADESH WERE NOT CHANGED, A MORE ISLAMIC CHARACTER WOULD BE EVIDENT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT RADIO BANGLADESH ABANDONED TAGORE

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SONGS (WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM) AND STOPPED READINGS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA. MUCH WAS MADE OF THE MIDDAY LIFTING OF THE CURFEW TO PERMIT JUMMA PRAYERS ON THE DAY OF THE COUP. JOI BANGLA, WITH ITS SANSKRIT CONNOTATIONS, DISAPPEARED FROM USE AT THE END OF SPEECHES, AND WAS REPLACED BY BANGLADESH ZINDABAD. HOWEVER, READINGS FROM THE GITA AND TAGORE SONGS ARE AGAIN HEARD. ONLY THE ZINDABAD PERSISTS. IF ANY CHANGE IN THE NAME OF BANGLADESH TAKES PLACE, IT MAY BE THE SIMPLE DROPPING OF THE WORD "PEOPLE'S", THEREBY LEAVING THE COUNTRY AN UNQUALIFIED REPUBLIC. MOST OBSERVERS CREDIT CONCERN FOR INDIAN SENSIBILITIES FOR KEEPING THE NEW GOVERNMENT FIRMLY ON THE SECULAR PATH.

7. AT THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER MUJIB, BANGLADESH CONFRONTS MUCH UNCERTAINTY. THE LOCUS OF POWER HAS YET TO BE FIRMLY FIXED, AND FEAR OF INDIA IS IN THE AIR. NEVERTHELESS, THE NEW GOVERNMENT UNDER KHONDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED IS TRYING TO RESTORE A MEASURE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT. BUT FOR THE MOMENT, CONSIDERATIONS OF IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAM ARE IN ABEYANCE.
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